

THE CONNECTING LINK

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

We are called to SEEK God's Word, to SHARE and CELEBRATE God's love and to SERVE Jesus Christ in the world.



DECEMBER 2023-JANUARY 2024

WORSHIP WITH US

Morning Worship on Sundays at 10:00 a.m.

Our services are also recorded and made available later. You can find us on Facebook at Hickory Hills Presbyterian Church and on our website at hickoryhillspres.org.

Evening Worship on Sundays at 5:00 p.m.

CONTACT US

Hickory Hills Presbyterian Church
8426 West 95th Street, Hickory Hills, IL 60457
Phone: 708-598-3100
E-mail: hhpc@hickoryhillspres.org

VISIT US ONLINE

www.hickoryhillspres.org

*Gifts of time and love
are surely the basic
ingredients of a truly
merry Christmas.*

—Peg Bracken



A Letter from Rev. Edie, Christmas Services, Bible Study Break	2,3
Worship Readings, Sermons, Reflections	4
Prayer Requests	5
Ministry Update: Discipleship	6
'Round Our Church	7
Church Musician's Corner	8
Birthdays, Contact Information	9
LOL for Christmas & New Year's	10
Gifts of Christmas Inspiration	11
Try These Recipes	12
Upcoming Events	13
Calendars for December 2023 & January 2024	14,15

A Letter from Rev. Edie



When you stop and listen, what voices do you hear? When you take a little time to reflect, notice where you are, what you have been up to – what voices do you hear? We all have them. They can be voices of approval or disapproval. They can be voices telling us what we ought to be or should be doing different, voices that remind us who we are or who we are not. Sometimes they are voices that ask deep and meaningful questions about our place in the world or God’s work in our lives. Sometimes they are self-sabotaging, asking “who do you think you are?” Some of these voices are our own, our old stories, longings and hopes; our own wisdom born out of experience. Some of these voices are inherited – the voices of those who influenced us as children, teens, or young adults. But if we are still long enough, if we quiet some of those negative voices a little longer, we can also hear the still, small voice of God.

Scripture is full of voices speaking to God, about God, and for God. Sometimes we even hear from God directly. “A voice cries out...” is our theme for Advent this year. The voice of the prophet who predicted the coming of Christ generations earlier. The voice of John the Baptizer crying out to the crowd in the wilderness

that the Messiah has some. The voice of Mary, the mother of Jesus, singing of God turning the world upside down. These voices of praise, warning and possibility are voices not just for those long ago, but voices for us as well.

What is the cry of the prophets for us in this season? What is it that we have to learn, to receive, to accept?

A voice cries – hope
A voice cries – peace
A voice cries- joy
A voice cries – love

A voice cries, cries in distress and anger at the shock of cold air, cries in need for nurture, warmth, nourishment. Cries as only a newborn baby can cry – Emmanuel. God with us. God offering us hope, peace, joy, and love.

But it isn’t enough to hear the words, is it? It isn’t enough for the voices to cry out and tell us to feel something that is so far away or to find something that seems to have eluded us. The Voice that cries out, the very voice of God, is a voice of assurance and of command. This is a voice that insists on possibility even when

all we can see when we look around is despair and destruction. This is a voice that insists on responsibility and action even when it would be much easier to run and hide, to lock our doors, to pretend that if we can just muster the feeling that will be enough.

As we enter the Advent Season, we are invited to stop and listen. We are invited to hear the cries and respond. We are invited into the possibility that the promises of God are not far away or someday, they are here and now, urgent, immediate, today. In the middle of the rush, the doing, the events and responsibilities – Stop. Listen. God is still speaking. God is still present with us, even as we anticipate the coming of the Christ Child, even as we anticipate his return. Still, God is with us.

You are the one who carries hope, peace, joy, and love into the world. You, all of you together, are the people who offer a glimpse of God’s goodness. Where have you heard the voice? Where have you caught a glimpse of God? How will you respond?

Grace and Peace to All
this Christmas,
Rev. Edie



Join with HNPC family and friends as we celebrate the coming of Jesus together on Christmas Eve, Sunday, December 24.

10:00 ~ AM Morning Worship
11:00 PM ~ Candlelight Christmas Eve Service

Christmas Carol Sing
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31
DURING 10:00 AM WORSHIP
(No 5:00 PM Evening Worship will be held.)



ATTENTION BIBLE STUDY GROUP

Our bible study group will take a Christmas break. Our last meet will be on Monday, December 18 at 1:00 PM and will resume Monday, January 15, 2024, at 1:00 PM downstairs.

Enjoy the Beauty of Christmas!



Reflections

Where do you find hope? What are you hoping for?

God's peace is also referred to as wholeness or Shalom. How does wholeness reflect peace? How might God be seeking restore peace in you?

Reflect on the difference between joy and happiness. Why does God offer us joy?

We are commanded to love God with all that we are and our neighbors as we love ourselves. How are you acting with love in this season? How are you choosing love? What might God be inviting you into in the coming year?

Reflect upon the promises made at baptism. Who made those promises for you? What do they mean to you now? (You can look up PCUSA liturgy online.)

Jesus called his disciples. What does it mean that you also are called by Jesus? What task might Jesus be giving you?



The following are readings and sermons that Rev. Edie will focus on during Sunday worship services. If you don't have Internet access, you may read and reflect on these Scripture passages in your bible. You can participate in virtual Sunday worship livestreamed on Facebook at 10:00 a.m. Sunday mornings or recorded and posted on our website at www.hickoryhillspres.org.

DECEMBER 2023

December 3, 2023

1st Sunday of Advent
 Readings: Isaiah 64: 1-9;
 Mark 13: 24-37
Sermon: *A Voice Cries: Hope*

December 10

2nd Sunday of Advent
 Readings: Isaiah 40: 1-11;
 Mark 1: 1-8
Sermon: *A Voice Cries: Peace*

December 17

3rd Sunday of Advent
 Readings: Isaiah 61:1-4; 8;
 John 1: 6-9, 19-28
Sermon: *A Voice Cries: Joy*

December 24

4th Sunday of Advent
 Readings: Luke 1: 26-55;
 Romans 16: 25-27
Sermon: *A Voice Cries: Glory*

December 31 (Carol Sing)

4th Sunday of Advent
 Readings: Isaiah 61: 10-62;
 Luke 2: 22-40

JANUARY 2024

January 7, 2024

Baptism of the Lord
 Readings: Isaiah 60: 1-6;
 Matthew 2: 1-12
Sermon: *Stand and Shine*

January 14

2nd Sunday after Epiphany
 Readings: Genesis: 1-15;
 Mark 1: 4-11
Sermon: *Baptism Promises*

January 21

3rd Sunday after Epiphany
 Readings: Jonah 3: 1-5, 10;
 Mark 1: 14-20
Sermon: *Jesus Calling*

January 28

4th Sunday after Epiphany
 Readings: 1 Corinthians 8: 1-13;
 Mark 1: 14-20A
Sermon: *Knowledge Puffs Up, Love Builds Up*



Our thoughts
and prayers
are with you.



The following is a current list of those we are remembering in prayer. If you are on this prayer list and wish to be removed or you would like to be added to the list, e-mail the church office at hpsc@hickoryhillspres.org, call the office at 708-598-3100 or enter your prayer request online at hickoryhillspes.org/prayerrequest/

WE PRAY FOR THOSE IN NEED OF HEALING.

Ada S (Susan F) **Carroll C** (Sandy B) **Fay B** (Sandy B); **Francie** (Karen G) **Jill R** (Jeni V) **Lori** (Evelyn G) **Mike L** (Sandy B) **Philomina** (Diane C) **Rae** (Karen G) **Raymond** (Diane C) **Susanne L** (Sandy B)

WE PRAY FOR THOSE IN NEED OF STRENGTH.

Bill (Bernie) **Bob D** (Dave D) **Bob M** (Grace M) **David D** (Karen G) **Esther E** (Grace M) **Jayden K** **Joel** (Jeni V) **Lisa E** (Grace) **Margaret** (Wanda M) **Toni**

WE PRAY FOR THOSE IN NEED OF COMFORT.

Bruce & Kaitlyn & Family (Jeni V) **Georgene** (Jeni V) **Ada S** (Susan) **Doris** (Diane C)

WE PRAY FOR THOSE IN NEED.

Diana (Wilda D) **Kaitlyn** (Karen G)

WE PRAY FOR THE BLESSINGS OF GOD.

Toni K

*Be Still,
and know that
I am God*



Discipleship . . . Following Jesus, Together

A Report by Jean Swearingen

The Discipleship of Hickory Hills Presbyterian Church (HHPC) stays busy. It is difficult to realize another year is coming to its close. Here is a synopsis of what we still have planned in 2023 and some upcoming events for 2024!

Brookfield Zoo Holiday Magic

HHPC was once again gifted a Christmas Tree for Brookfield Zoo's 2023 Holiday Magic! **Our tree is #416, located in the Zoo's East Mall.** Our tree is a portion of over 2 million twinkling LED lights! We thank our donor for this annual opportunity. We thank Mel for overseeing the decorating of the tree.

Holiday Magic 2023

November 24, 25, 26 & 30:
3:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
December 1-3, 7-10, 14-17, 21-23,
26-31: 3:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

In 2023 for North Gate Entry, *Holiday Magic* advance tickets are not required. However, if you are not a member of Brookfield Zoo, you may choose to purchase them in advance. *Holiday Magic* admission is free for members of Brookfield Zoo. Non-members will be charged Zoo admission fees. *Please see Brookfield Zoo's website for any clarifications you require.*

Christmas Tea

Our Christmas Tea will be held at HHPC on Sunday, December 3, 2023. Please see information elsewhere within this newsletter. This is always a wonderful, relaxing time to spend with members of our church family and their friends and family. Thank you to Dianne and Debbie spearheading this seasonal event. Come, relax, enjoy!

Sunday School 2024

HHPC will be initiating a change to our Youth Sunday School

beginning in 2024. Our 3 years through 5th Grade and our 6th Grade through High School Sunday School classes will begin to meet on the **first (1st) and third (3rd) Sundays of each month.** We will begin this pattern on Sunday, January 7, 2024.

Souper/Super Sunday 2024

Mark your calendars for Sunday, February 11, 2024. We will celebrate Souper/Super Sunday. Sign-ups will appear and flyers will be seen! This event replaces Fellowship Hour on February 11, 2024. A freewill offering will be out for donations.

Lent 2024

Ash Wednesday is February 14, 2024. Plans continue to be solidified for Ash Wednesday. Stay tuned for announcements, sign-ups and for information in the February 2024 *Connecting Link* newsletter.

We wish all members of our HHPC family a Blessed Holiday Season and a Happy New Year!

Jean



'Round Our Church

A FAITHWALKING FEAST!

Our Faithwalking alumni group gathered in Fellowship Hall in November for a pre-Thanksgiving celebration and enjoyed a delicious homemade meal.

Homemade turkey, baked ham and delicious side dishes and desserts made by our Faithwalking friends were so enjoyed. A discussion followed the meal.

Faithwalking Foundations is offered as six 10-week segments, or modules, each designed to take you on a journey of growth, transformation, and formation. The modules focus on six topics: self-awareness, authenticity, managing anxiety, emotional maturity, integrity, and living on mission with God.

Those interested in signing up for future

Faithwalking classes should contact Rev. Edie.



Faithwalkers chose from a variety of Thanksgiving homemade foods and desserts.



Tonight's meal? No need for words! A smile from Faithwalker Barb Karcz said it all!

Bible Study

everyone is welcome

Join with a group of faith-filled friends as we listen and learn from Rev. Edie Lenz who shares with us her biblical knowledge and insight into the Word of God. **Join us Mondays at 1:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall.**

COMMUNITY MEALS CONTINUE

Community Meals at HPC are served on the first Mondays of each month from 5:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. and continue to draw in neighboring residents.

Menus change each month and are served up by our volunteers who continue to bring joy to those who come.

We ask God's Christmas blessings on all who come to our drive-thru and to our dedicated volunteers for their continued service to others.



'TIS THE SEASON FOR OUR MICRO-PANTRY

We are regularly blessed with donations of food items from our members and friends which help stock our Micro-pantry outside our church for those in need. Currently, we are low on groceries and would appreciate any help to replenish, especially during this season of giving.

Thank you and God bless you for your support and generosity, especially during this Christmas season.

Church Musician's Corner by Greg Rolla



Most Popular Christmas Songs

I have to admit that when it comes to Christmas holiday songs, I'm an unapologetic traditionalist. But times (and generations) . . . they are a changin'!

In 2022, Irvin Berlin's *White Christmas (1942)* didn't even make the Top 10 – the first time in 80 years! It was replaced by:

1. *All I Want for Christmas is You* by Mariah Carey; followed by **2.** *Last Christmas (Wham!)*; **3.** *Do They Know It's Christmas?* (Band Aid); **4.** *Mistletoe* (Justin Bieber); **5.** *Santa Tell Me* (Ariana Grande); and **6.** *It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas* (Michael Buble).

I say, Bah Humbug! Well, I'll give the last one a pass, even though I like the vocals of Johnny Mathis better.

Recently, the New York Public Library listed the Top 10 Christmas carols, and they all get a thumbs-up from me, no matter what order they are in:

10. *O Holy Night*; **9.** *Go Tell It on the Mountain*; **8.** *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen*; **7.** *Joy to the World*; **6.** *O Christmas Tree (O Tanenbaum)*; **5.** *O Little Town of Bethlehem*; **4.** *Angels We Have Heard on High*; **3.** *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*; **2.** *O Come All Ye Faithful*; **1.** *Silent Night*.

For me, a Christmas carol is what makes this holiday. It brings to mind the birth of the Christ Child on earth—the Son of God. As long as we keep that memory in our hearts, the peace of the season won't be very far away.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to one and all!

Greg



We recently published the Hickory Hills Presbyterian Church 2023 Member Directory. To keep this Directory up-to-date, we ask our members and friends to either call us or e-mail us if they have a change to their contact information. Copies are available on the table at the back of the church or call the church office at 708-598-3100.

Phone: 708-598-3100
E-mail: hhpc@hickoryhillspres.org

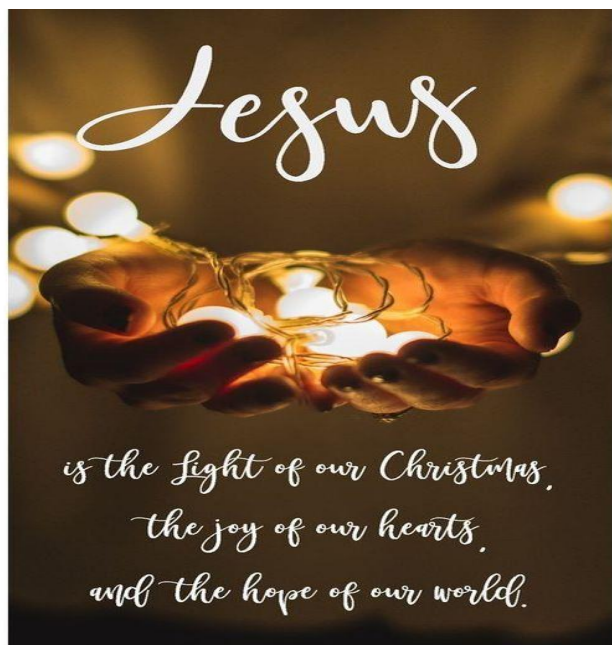


DECEMBER

Darlene Delaney	December 1
Melanie Swindle	December 1
Bryan Ambrosat	December 12
Gabby Meyer	December 15
Jayden Kenealy	December 16
Gina Ciametti	December 16
Greg Nirtaut	December 16
Lynn Majersky	December 17
Natasha Swindle	December 20

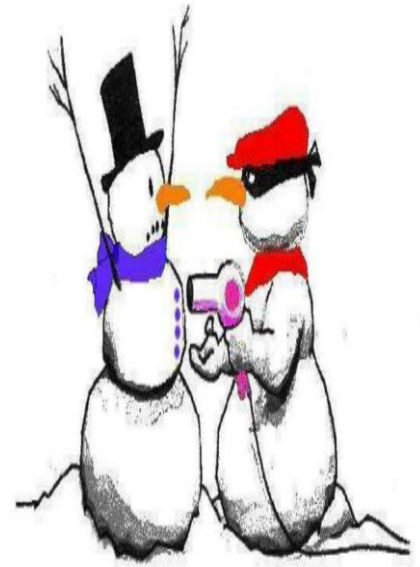
JANUARY

Hunter Treccani	January 1
Stan Flynn	January 4
MacKenzie Netter	January 7
Andrew Witek	January 21
Ashley Fiedor	January 22
Edie Lenz	January 28
Audrey Sowa	January 31



LOL

for Christmas
& New Year's



"Bill got me a little space heater...
and the pounds just melted off!"

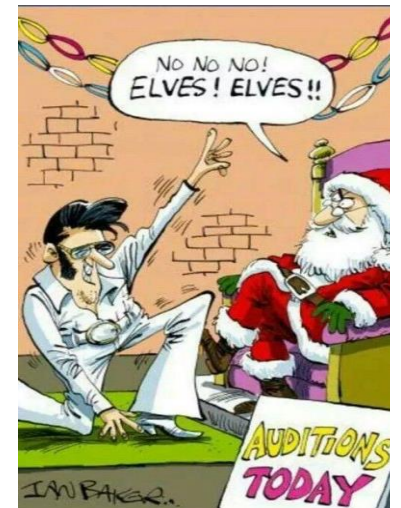


Honey, our lawyer wishes us,
but in no way guarantees,
a Happy New Year.



I SHOULD PROBABLY
BE MORE
REALISTIC

RESOLUTIONS
BARK LESS
WAG MORE
BE NICER
TO THE CAT



No No No!
ELVES! ELVES!!

AUDITIONS
TODAY



Gifts of Christmas Inspiration

God never gives someone a gift they are not capable of receiving. If He gives us the gift of Christmas, it is because we all have the ability to understand and receive it.

—Pope Francis

I truly believe if we keep telling the Christmas story, singing the Christmas songs, and living the Christmas spirit, we can bring joy and happiness and peace to this world.

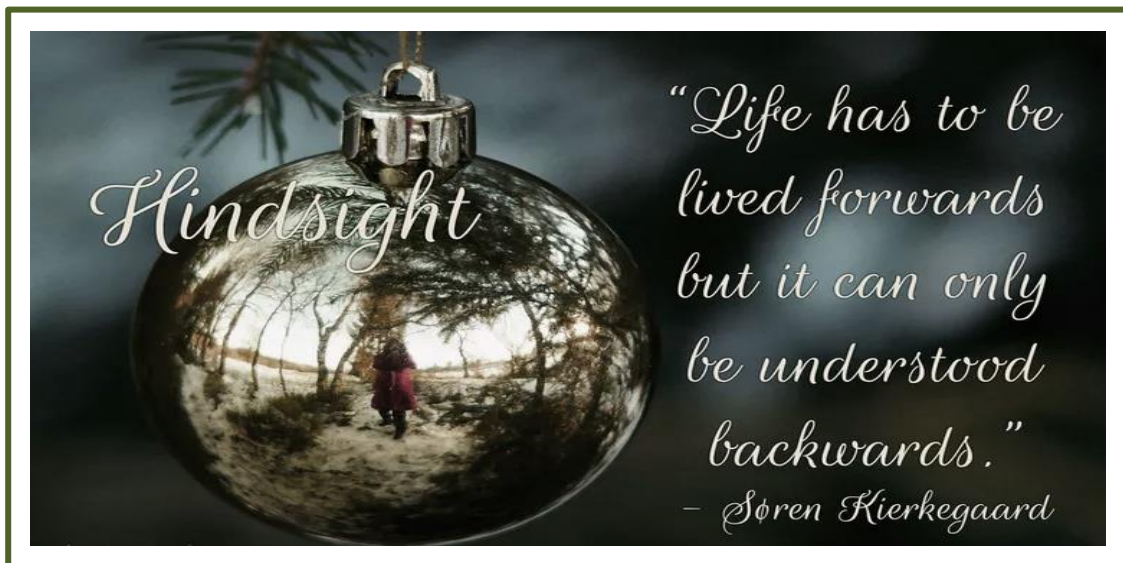
—Norman Vincent Peale

A good conscience is a continual Christmas.

—Benjamin Franklin

Christmas Gift Suggestions: To your enemy, forgiveness. To an opponent, tolerance. To a friend, your heart. To a customer, service. To all, charity. To every child, a good example. To yourself, respect.

—Peg Bracken



"Life has to be lived forwards but it can only be understood backwards."

— Søren Kierkegaard



TRY THESE RECIPES!

CANDIED PECANS



Ingredients

- 1 cup white sugar (see Test Kitchen Tip below)
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ to ½ teaspoon salt, or to taste
- 1 large egg white
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1 pound pecan halves

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 250 degrees F (120 degrees C).
2. Mix sugar, cinnamon, and salt together in a small bowl.
3. Whisk egg white and water together in a large bowl until frothy. Toss pecans in the egg white mixture to coat. Slowly pour in sugar mixture and stir until pecans are evenly coated. Spread onto a baking sheet.
4. Bake in the preheated oven for 10 minutes. Stir pecans and rearrange into a single layer. Continue to cook, stirring every 10 to 15 minutes, until pecans are evenly browned, another 30 to 50 minutes.

HOLIDAY HOT SPINACH DIP



Ingredients

- 1 (10 ounce) package frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained
- ½ cup red bell pepper, diced
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 (6.5 ounce) jar artichoke hearts, drained and mashed
- ½ cup sour cream
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- salt and ground black pepper to taste
- ¼ cup heavy cream

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).

Mix together spinach, bell pepper, garlic, artichokes, sour cream, and parmesan cheese. Season with salt and pepper. Mixture will be thick; add cream to thin consistency. Spoon into a 1-quart baking dish.

Bake for 20 minutes, or until bubbly. Serve with crackers.



We ask our members and friends to note what's remaining in '23 and what's in store for '24 at HHPC!

**NOW UNTIL DECEMBER 24, 2023
HHPC TREE OF WARMTH**

Add your donations of gloves, hats, etc. for the needy to our tree in the narthex.

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2023
HHPC CHRISTMAS TEA
FELLOWSHIP HALL**

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM IN THE GYM

Musical entertainment by Pianist Greg Rolla, Sing-a-Long, Refreshments, Raffle prizes

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2023
DRIVE-THRU HHPC COMMUNITY MEAL
5:30 PM – 6:00 PM**

**DECEMBER 1-3, 7-10, 14-17, 21-23 26-31
3:00 PM – 9:00 PM**

**BROOKFIELD ZOO HOLIDAY MAGIC
(ON HOLIDAY MAGIC DATES)**

*Come see HHPC's Christmas Tree #446
(Zoo's East Mall)*


**SUNDAY, JANUARY 7, 2024
10:00 AM AT MORNING WORSHIP
ORDINATION & INSTALLATION
OF ELDERS AND DEACONS**

**MONDAY, JANUARY 8
HHPC DRIVE-THRU
COMMUNITY MEAL
5:30 PM – 6:00 PM**

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 14
ANNUAL REPORT SUBMISSIONS
CONTENT DUE**

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 28
ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING
FOLLOWING 10:00 AM WORSHIP
CELEBRATION OF BERNIE ROCHE
ON HER HHPC RETIREMENT
FELLOWSHIP HALL
*(Follows the Congregational Meeting)***

DECEMBER 2023

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
					1 Brookfield Zoo Holiday Magic begins thru Dec. 31 (for details, see p. 13)	2
3 10:00 AM Worship, Sunday School, Fellowship 1:00 PM Christmas Tea 5:00 PM Evening Worship	4 1:00 PM Bible Study 5:30 PM Community Meal	5	6 11:00 AM Chair Yoga	7 7:00 PM Traditional Yoga	8	9
10 10:00 AM Worship, Fellowship 5:00 PM Evening Worship	11 1:00 PM Bible Study 7:30 PM Session meets	12	13 11:00 AM Chair Yoga	14 7:00 PM Traditional Yoga	15	16
17 10:00 AM Worship, Sunday School, Fellowship 5:00 PM Evening Worship	18 1:00 PM Christmas Break for Bible Study; resumes Jan. 15	19	20 11:00 AM Chair Yoga	21 7:00 PM Traditional Yoga	22	23
24 10:00 AM Worship, Fellowship 4:00 PM Christmas Eve Worship 11:00 PM Candlelight Christmas Eve Service	25 	26	27 11:00 AM Chair Yoga	28 7:00 PM Traditional Yoga	29	30
31 10:00 AM Carol Sing 5:00 PM No Evening Worship						

JANUARY 2024

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
	1 	2	3 11:00 AM Chair Yoga	4 7:00 PM Traditional Yoga	5	6
7 10:00 AM Worship, Sunday School, Fellowship (Ordination & Installation of Deacons & Elders) 5:00 PM Evening Worship	8 No Bible Study; resumes Jan. 15 5:30 PM Community Meal 6:30 PM Discipleship meets	9	10 11:00 AM Chair Yoga	11 7:00 PM Traditional Yoga	12	13
14 10:00 AM Worship, Fellowship 11:30 AM Board of Deacons meet 5:00 PM Evening Worship ANNUAL REPORT CONTENT DUE TODAY!	15 1:00 PM Bible Study resumes 7:30 PM Session meets	16	17 11:00 AM Chair Yoga	18 7:00 PM Traditional Yoga	19	20
21 10:00 AM Worship, Sunday School, Fellowship 11:30 AM Missions meet 1:00 PM Christmas Tea 5:00 PM Evening Worship	22 1:00 PM Christmas Break for Bible Study;; resumes Jan. 15	23	24 11:00 AM Chair Yoga	25 7:00 PM Traditional Yoga	26	27
28 10:00 AM Worship, Fellowship, 11:30 AM Annual Congregational Meeting followed by Celebration of Bernie Roche on her HHPC retirement 5:00 PM Evening Meal	29	30	31 11:00 AM Chair Yoga			

DEC. 2023 - JAN. 2024



A monthly newsletter from Hickory Hills Presbyterian Church
The Connecting Link

DATED MATERIAL – DO NOT HOLD

Hickory Hills Presbyterian Church
8426 West 95th Street
Hickory Hills, IL 60457